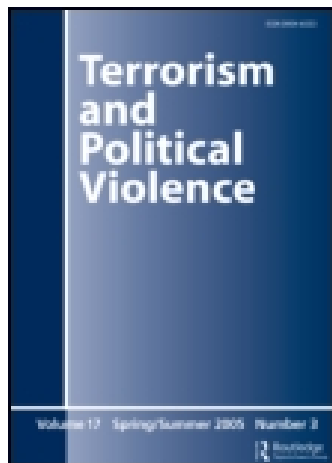


This article was downloaded by: [UQ Library]

On: 19 November 2014, At: 07:01

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Terrorism and Political Violence

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ftpv20>

The Beauty and the Beast: Jean-Paul Sartre and the Baader-Meinhof Gang

Meir Seidler ^{a b}

^a The Department of Israel Heritage , Ariel University of Samaria , Jerusalem , Israel

^b Department of Basic Jewish Studies , Bar-Ilan University , Ramat Gan , Tel Aviv , Israel

Published online: 14 Aug 2013.

To cite this article: Meir Seidler (2013) The Beauty and the Beast: Jean-Paul Sartre and the Baader-Meinhof Gang, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 25:4, 597-605, DOI: [10.1080/09546553.2013.814501](https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2013.814501)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2013.814501>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

The Beauty and the Beast: Jean-Paul Sartre and the Baader-Meinhof Gang

MEIR SEIDLER

The Department of Israel Heritage, Ariel University of Samaria,
Jerusalem; and Department of Basic Jewish Studies, Bar-Ilan University,
Ramat Gan, Tel Aviv, Israel

The article deals with the intellectual and philosophical background of Sartre's thought, which made him susceptible to the influence of left-wing totalitarian structures in general and to left-wing terrorism in particular. Consequently it is argued that Sartre's identification with Stalinism in his younger years, and his later sympathies with the infamous German Baader-Meinhof terrorist gang, were more than mere expressions of his personality, but rather part and parcel of his special blend of existentialism and philosophy. At the end of the article, Sartre's position in this matter is contrasted with the position of another existentialist French thinker, Sartre's contemporary, Albert Camus.

Keywords Baader, Baader-Meinhof, intellectuals, Meinhof, Red Army Faction, Sartre, Stalinism, terrorism, urban guerilla

On December 4, 1974, Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature and someone whom many people considered to be one of the greatest philosophers of the twentieth century, visited the German terrorist Andreas Baader in prison at Stammheim in Southern Germany, where Baader was awaiting trial. Baader was the imprisoned leader of the terrorist group known as the “Red Army Faction,”¹ or, as it had been dubbed by the media and the public in Western Germany, the “Baader-Meinhof Gang.”²

Visiting Baader in prison was a step indicative of the kind of political activism which the philosopher Sartre demanded of himself and of every human being. As far as the objective of the visit and the choice of its “host” were concerned, there was a political message here which, as I will try to show in the present article, was a direct outcome of Sartre's philosophy and ideology. Daniel Cohn Bendit, alias “Dany le rouge” (“Danny the Red”), leader of the 1968 student uprising in France, was supposed to accompany Sartre on his visit as his interpreter. However, Cohn Bendit was not permitted to enter, and saw Sartre only after Sartre had emerged from the meeting. According to Cohn Bendit's testimony, the only sentence he heard from Sartre about Baader, after a protracted silence, was very brief: “*Ce qu'il est con*

Meir Seidler is a senior lecturer in Jewish philosophy at Ariel University of Samaria and at Bar-Ilan University. He specializes in modern Jewish thought and its relation to Jewish sources and general philosophy.

Address correspondence to Meir Seidler, Bialik 4, 5401102 Givat Shmuel, Israel. E-mail: mseidler@surfree.net.il

ce Baader,”³ a phrase which, rendered in translation, amounts to: “What a jerk this Baader is.” The visit, then, was a failure. Apparently, Sartre’s gross expression was less a reflection of his feelings about the ideology of the Baader-Meinhof Group (which, in any event, he had been acquainted with before making his visit) than of the cultural and intellectual chasm which had manifested itself in this face-to-face encounter between the leading French philosopher and Germany’s foremost terrorist. His leadership talent not withstanding, Baader was a former criminal disguised as a political activist, but still lacking any intellectual grounding whatsoever. Besides, he had an especially rude manner of speaking. For instance, he had the habit, appreciable in light of a kind of play on words in German, of calling the women members of his group by the German word which means the feminine sex organ.⁴ It would appear that, beyond the mental gap, there was also the language barrier, and the need for an interpreter approved by the authorities did not do much to enable the two interlocutors to bridge the personal and cultural gap yawning between them.

Years later, Sartre himself admitted that the visit was a mistake. He added in the same breath, however, that he would make the same mistake all over again.⁵ An interesting statement in its own right, this sheds light not only on Sartre’s own character and personality, but also on the non-committal nature of his social and political philosophy. Before we consider those elements of Sartre’s philosophy which are of interest to us in the context of our discussion, we must acquaint ourselves with the Baader-Meinhof Group. Who were the members of the RAF (the abbreviation standing for the “Rote Armee Fraktion”) who, for over a decade, terrified West Germany, leaving their mark on the history of the post-World War II West German Republic?⁶

The emergence of the RAF was the direct outcome of the radicalization of significant segments of the student protest movement which washed over Western Europe (primarily France and Germany) in 1967–1969. In France, the movement, at its peak in May 1968, nearly toppled the government, while in Germany it never achieved much popular support outside student circles. Instead, in Germany, the radicalization of parts of the protest movement led, in the end, to an armed struggle against their country. This radicalization came in the wake of the death of the student Benno Ohnesorg, who was shot to death by a policeman during a demonstration protesting the visit of the Persian Shah to Berlin on June 2, 1967.⁷ Less than a year later, in the spring of 1968, Andreas Baader and his girlfriend Gudrun Ensslin set fire to two shopping malls in Frankfurt as a gesture of protest against the war in Vietnam. The activists’ message was: we are not going to stop at polite demonstrations any longer. If Vietnam is burning, we will also burn the centers of those states which support the war in Vietnam. The shopping mall was seen as a showcase of the much loathed, war-mongering capitalism. True enough, there were no human casualties in this case of arson, but the fire did wreak extensive damage to property. Baader and Ensslin were soon arrested. While awaiting trial, they became involved in underground activism, but Baader was arrested again and sentenced to three years’ imprisonment for the act of arson. He was set free by force in a violent operation (which left two prison guards wounded by gunfire, one of them in very serious condition) carried out by his associates, including his girlfriend, Gudrun Ensslin, and a well-known woman journalist, stage director, and radio program announcer whose thinking had also undergone a process of radicalization and whose name was Ulrike Meinhof. From now on, some dozen young people were operating as clandestine underground activists in West Germany. Baader and Meinhof were considered their leaders: Meinhof

was supposed to be the head ideologue of the group, while Baader was the uncontested director of operations, the man of action. Hence the unofficial name of the group, "Baader-Meinhof."

After their disappearance into the underground, Meinhof in 1971 published a programmatic booklet titled "The Concept of Urban Guerilla Warfare,"⁸ in which she introduced the group's tactics: transferring the behavior patterns of guerilla fighters in South America into West German cities. The group robbed banks and engaged in terrorist attacks (including political assassinations), both against American targets in West Germany and against targets identified as central support pillars of the West German state. The authorities in West Germany set about preparing for a counter attack. Pictures of the group's members, who were wanted by the police, began to appear on every street corner. The pace of the terrorist attacks picked up, with the number of those killed continually on the rise. West German democracy was challenged, especially in view of the means resorted to by the state in order to locate the terrorists: gathering information on extensive sectors of the population,⁹ phone tapping, and the like. Such methods were commonly looked upon with distaste, especially by the leftist flank of the political spectrum. Armed policemen went about patrolling city centers. In the summer of 1972, following yet another series of terrorist attacks and after a policing and intelligence operation unprecedented in West German history, the group's leaders were apprehended, including Baader, Ensslin, and Meinhof. They were later held in a special wing of the prison at Stammheim in Southern Germany. Their trial opened in 1975, and in 1977 they were sentenced to lifetime imprisonments.

But even after the leaders' arrest, terrorist activity in West Germany went on unabated. Rather than slow down, it accelerated. During the time that the leaders spent in jail, from within the prison at Stammheim, the second stage of the struggle, whose ideals the members of the group had emblazoned on their shield, unfolded. The group's members now underwent a transformation in their own eyes as well as in the eyes of their supporters: from fighters of the underground, they now turned into the victims of a neo-fascist regime. The struggle now concentrated on a propaganda effort taking place on two levels: a) the demand for recognition of the imprisoned leaders as prisoners of war, and b) the (largely successful) attempt to persuade extensive segments of the leftist public in Germany that these leaders were being held in inhuman conditions, that they were isolated and deprived of human contact, and that they were, in effect, undergoing torture in jail.¹⁰ The group again and again initiated hunger strikes in protest against the conditions in which they were being held in prison. Holger Meins, one of the group's members, actually died while on one of these hunger strikes, despite forced feeding.

Meinhof committed suicide while in prison in 1976. Beyond prison walls, during the five years of their leaders' imprisonment, members of the second generation of the Red Army Faction perpetrated a large number of terrorist attacks, leaving dozens of people killed, in order to set Baader and his company free. The confrontation between the terrorists and the West German state reached its zenith in September–October 1977, a period which later came to be known as the "German Autumn."¹¹ Palestinian terrorists were also involved in this confrontation. The link between German terrorists and the Palestinians had been forged as early as the beginning of the 1970s, when the Baader-Meinhof Group did training in the PLO refugee camps in Jordan.

The preplanned attack which was supposed to set free the prisoners held at Stammheim involved two stages: a) the bloody kidnapping of the leading West

German industrialist Hanns Martin Schleyer,¹² and b) the hijacking of a Lufthansa airplane flight to Mogadishu, Somalia. In exchange for freeing Schleyer and the airplane passengers, the terrorists demanded freedom for the prisoners held at Stammheim. Helmut Schmidt, the German Chancellor at the time, decided not to give in to the terrorists' demands, but the state continued to carry on negotiations for appearances' sake, so as to gain time and to prepare to liberate the hijacked plane. On October 17, 1977, special units of the German border guard (GSG 9) liberated the Lufthansa airplane in Mogadishu. Barely hours after this information had become public, Baader, Ensslin, and another member of the group, Jan-Carl Raspe, committed suicide in jail.¹³ Schleyer's body was found in the trunk of a car the following day. The German Autumn had come to a close.

We should note that by the time of Sartre's visit to the prison at Stammheim in 1974, that is, about three years before the end, the group's double name of "Baader-Meinhof" had already long since stopped being indicative of reality. Ulrike Meinhof's status in the group had been undermined in the wake of a series of humiliations, particularly from Baader. True enough, she was permitted to compose some position papers here and there, or declarations addressed to the sympathizing public or to the West German state (incidentally, she was also the one who wrote the letter to Sartre, in which she implored him to demand that the West German authorities grant him permission to visit the members of the group in jail). However, in the end, it was not she, who was familiar with Sartre's writings, but rather Baader, the leader without any intellectual ability, that received the philosopher during his visit. This fact more than anything else concretizes something that today we know for certain: during the period in question, Meinhof's presence was just being tolerated, at the very most, by the group. She was nowhere near being a leadership figure (and perhaps this formed the background for her suicide another year-and-a-half later).

Even though Sartre's visit to Baader was, as we have already pointed out, a resounding fiasco, this was far from signifying that Sartre was about to distance himself from terrorism in general, or from West German terrorism in particular. Sartre continued to voice his support for the members of the Baader-Meinhof Group at later junctures, as well. Even though these expressions of support were couched in terms of reservation and controversy, we should nonetheless note that, for the most part, only issues of tactics were controversial. This is a point which bears stressing, underscoring as it does Sartre's ideological closeness to the terrorists, a closeness which was not substantially beclouded even by the failed meeting with the terrorist Baader.¹⁴ As already noted, Sartre's reservations and self-distancing from the Baader-Meinhof Group were more immediately connected to tactical questions than to matters of principle.¹⁵

What are the philosophical foundations of Sartre's thought, which indicate an ideological closeness to terrorism in general, and to the Baader-Meinhof Group in particular?

We can pinpoint the principal elements in Sartre's approach to acts of terrorism perpetrated by groups who defined themselves as freedom fighters; we can also see his own identifying with them. This comes through both in his writings and in his public activity as early as the 1950s. Anybody who is surprised by Sartre's proximity to terrorism has simply not read him.

There was a love story, *prima facie* not quite a self-evident one, between Sartre's existential philosophy and Stalinist Marxism, a love imbroglio that for Sartre lasted from the late forties until the Russians invaded Hungary in 1956. This should

provide us with the key to understanding the meeting which took place between the aging Sartre and the uneducated terrorist and brute man of action Andreas Baader.

What led Sartre into the Marxist fold was the must of finding at least a just social solution for human beings in their existential distress, given the absence of any metaphysical answers. Sartre was not alone in turning to Marxism. After the end of World War II, many Western European intellectuals were sympathetic toward the Soviet Union. The USSR had sacrificed so much, it had gone through such great suffering in its war against Hitler, and it was for this reason seen as the hero of the war and the principal opponent of the monstrosities of fascism. This was also the basic stance shared by Sartre. Sartre made an effort to achieve total correspondence and identification with Stalinism, with the crowning moment in this process consisting in his famous 1952 trip to the Soviet Union. The trip came at a time when Stalinist terror was at a peak. And yet, returning from his trip, Sartre praised the freedom of speech enjoyed by the Soviets!¹⁶ Even so, despite the effort which he invested in identifying with the Soviet system, the existentialist Sartre did not quite manage to adapt to communism of the Soviet variety, formally giving it up, as we have noted, after the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956.¹⁷

After his disillusionment with the Soviet version of communism, Sartre turned to new channels within the extreme leftist camp: the armed struggle undertaken by the nations laboring under the yoke of colonialism against their colonial mother countries (meaning first and foremost Algeria's bloodstained struggle for independence from France). As we will see, the road from here to German terrorism of the Baader-Meinhof kind was not very long.

We should now take a moment to consider a number of elements constitutive of Sartre's thought, which paved the way for him to such a position of proximity to terrorism. According to Sartre, the whole of existential philosophy is summed up in the sentence: "Existence precedes essence."¹⁸ Human beings create their own essence by their own actions and only after the fact, by means of their free choice and the actions which stem from this choice. There is no essence underlying the whole of humanity, and certainly no essence constitutive of the individual. A hefty responsibility rests upon the shoulders of the human being, that is to say, of every human being: human beings are required to achieve their essence by means of the actions which they choose to perform. This choice is always bound to be somewhat arbitrary, considering that in the end, there is no unambiguous or objective hierarchy of values capable of leading or directing humanity.¹⁹ As an example, Sartre cites the hypothetical instance of a young Frenchman living under German occupation during World War II. The young man deliberates, unsure whether to join the Resistance or to remain at home to support his aged mother.²⁰ This example concretizes Sartre's conception that, when push comes to shove, all too often no general moral maxim is available, which can guide human beings in making their decisions.

At the same time, the statement that there is no such thing as the essence of the human being (based on some value-related features accessible to a general definition), is not quite exact. Considering that every human being, is free to construct his or her own essence, it is precisely this freedom that becomes the essential human element: freedom from any yoke of objective obligation that may be imposed upon a human being in advance. It may well be that a human being will invent different kinds of obligations for him or herself, changing ones, as per his or her own choice, in the course of his or her life. Yet it remains the case that, beyond the changing obligations, one thing stands firm and changeless: the human freedom to alter one's own values

and obligations (in the absence of any objective agency dictating to humans some obligation or another.²¹) We are thus led to the conclusion that the freedom to determine one's own essence as per one's will is itself the essence of the human being. Obviously, such a notion can be taken advantage of to lead anywhere, considering that humanity is free to choose its own objectives. This point in humanistic teaching, which makes the empirical human being be the ultimate standard of measurement for values, had already been made a note of by Sartre's contemporaries, the German Jewish philosophers Adorno and Horkheimer, in their book on the *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*.²²

Existentialism, then, by its very nature has an individualistic twist to it, maybe even an apolitical one. The human being's freedom to choose his or her own objectives, the authenticity of one's search, and the sincere measuring up against one's dire existential condition—all these lead mainstream existentialism to a mindset which is individualistic and anti-collectivistic in its very foundations.²³ But in Sartre's version, existentialism takes on a socio-political character. Now how is that? When I make some decision on the basis of my own free choice, in practice I want everyone to decide the same way (if and when they find themselves in the same situation); if I don't admit this, I am deceiving myself. Hence both the political ethos, and the attractiveness of totalitarian solutions. The example which Sartre cites²⁴ is one of a worker who chooses to join specifically a Christian workers' union. Such a worker is clearly of the opinion that everyone is supposed to join the same union, because it is the only one that espouses the right worldview. Moreover, in Sartre's opinion, a particular action undertaken by the individual, even if it involves decisions of a personal kind, is public in its nature. In this respect, Sartre is in his own way actually implementing an element of Kant's categorical imperative, where Kant sees all human action as some general statement whose origin and purpose both are beyond the individual. Considering that all of us find ourselves in some kind of communal political, economic, and social predicament, the shaping of any one particular individual person's strivings turns into a social program.²⁵ The transformation of the shaping of the personal strivings of the individual into a socio-political program is what endows Sartre's existential philosophy with its public character. Beginning in the late forties, Sartre was always aware of political goings on, always eager to influence the unfolding of events. For Sartre, there turns out to be no neutrality: for instance, anyone who does not struggle, or at least decry some injustice done by the leaders of the country in which he or she lives or by the tax money that he or she pays, becomes in practice a collaborator of the regime in power. Such a person is alone responsible for the ricochets which might strike back at him because of the actions of his government.

Even the terrorist Baader did not go to such extremes. In a documented exchange that took place about half-a-year before his death between him and one of the prison guards, Baader justified the death of the two escorts accompanying the Federal General Prosecutor Siegfried Buback (all three had been killed in a terrorist attack in April 1977) by pointing to the fact that the two had themselves chosen to work for Buback instead of "working in public transportation," for example. Their working together with the General Prosecutor is what made them into collaborators of the regime, and thus into legitimate targets.²⁶ In other words, unlike Sartre, the anti-intellectual Baader distinguishes, however slightly, between innocent civilians (such as public transportation workers) and those who actively serve the regime (such as a policeman or the personal chauffeur of a government official, the other two persons killed in the April 1977 terrorist attack). And indeed, except for the initial

founding incident in the shopping mall, the Baader-Meinhof Group never targeted innocent civilians whom it had not previously clearly identified as associated with the enemy. Instances of this last kind included a night club frequented by American soldiers, a court judge working for the hated regime (Drenkmann), an American base, a senior official in the Christian Democratic Party (Lorenz), a senior banker (Ponto), the General Prosecutor (Buback), and even the Springer publishing house, the disseminator of the largest newspaper in the country. All these had been marked as enemy targets. At least theoretically, Sartre was more of an extremist, in that he saw indiscriminate terror as justified under certain circumstances, when the goal exonerates the means. In the Preface which he wrote to the book *The Wretched of the Earth*²⁷ by Frantz Fanon, a foundational work for radical leftist circles, which was read by everyone from the freedom fighters in Algiers to the Baader-Meinhof Group to the Palestinian and Islamic terrorists, Sartre identifies unreservedly with the armed struggle of the nations of the Third World against the colonial powers. Fanon's book romanticizes rebels everywhere, and expressly justifies random killing of the innocent. This last is the point which we must address. We must also look into the notion that killing any citizen of the colonial mother country, who happens to turn up in the freedom fighters' way, is not simply just from the historical point of view. (This much alone would be a position corresponding to the Marxist-Leninist contempt for the individual.²⁸) Such killing is a genuine founding act, a catharsis of sorts, which transforms the oppressed into a free person. This is how Sartre himself puts it:

[Freedom fighters have but] a single duty, a single objective: drive out colonialism by every means . . . this irrepressible violence . . . is man reconstructing himself. . . . Once their rage explodes, they recover their lost coherence, they experience self-knowledge through reconstruction of themselves. . . . [This war] proceeds on its own to gradually emancipate the fighter . . . a fighter's weapon is his humanity. For in the first phase of the revolt killing is a necessity: killing a European is killing two birds with one stone, eliminating in one go oppressor and oppressed: leaving one man dead and the other man free; for the first time the survivor feels a national soil under his feet.²⁹

At this point, it is worth comparing Sartre to another Nobel Prize winner, another well-known French existentialist: Albert Camus (1913–1960). Camus in principle also justifies violent rebellion by the oppressed against their oppressors. But he never agrees to unrestrained violence when it is directed against innocent civilian targets:

Terrorism as such is unpardonable and must not be allowed to develop . . . whatever the objective it may have emblazoned on its banner, it will invariably lose its credibility the moment the terrorist butchers a gathering of people knowing that he is bound to kill women and children.³⁰

Earlier, in *The Rebel* (written a number of years before the outbreak of the rebellion in Algeria), Camus put forth his ethical stance: "Does the end justify the means? That is possible. But what will justify the end? To that question, which historical thought leaves pending, rebellion replies: the means."³¹

Sartre, by contrast, was doubtless hypnotized by total and violent solutions. He gave in to what Bernard Henri Levy called “the totalitarian temptation,”³² whether in the fifties (Stalinism) or later, when he had begun to identify with terrorism. It is true that Sartre was a complex person and thinker. For instance, he supported without reservations the right of the State of Israel to exist. But this did not prevent him from justifying the murder of the Israeli athletes in Munich (!),³³ or from collaborating with the most violent theoreticians of the radical left in France.³⁴

“The Beauty and the Beast” is the story of a lovely young woman and an ugly monster that in the end turns out to be a handsome prince. In the story, the beast ultimately also becomes beautiful. The story which I have tried to present in this essay is just the opposite. Prima facie it appears to be a case of a meeting between terrorists ready to walk on dead bodies so as to follow their ideology, and a philosopher concerned about prisoners’ human rights. But after reading his writings, we see the darker side of the Paris intellectual Jean-Paul Sartre, one of the greatest philosophers of the twentieth century, who has had a momentous impact on European intellectuals of the second half of the twentieth century, and who continues to have a real impact on the thinkers of today.

Notes

1. Rote Armee Fraktion.
2. Baader-Meinhof Bande.
3. Cf. Daniel Cohn Bendit, “Ce qu’il est con ce Baader,” *Libération*, March 11, 2005, <http://www.liberation.fr/culture/0101630683-ce-qu-il-est-con-ce-baader>.
4. See Sarah Colvin, *Ulrike Meinhof and West German Terrorism: Language, Violence and Identity* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Camden House, 2009), 188.
5. See Ian H. Birchall, *Sartre Against Stalinism* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), 216.
6. The following brief summary is based on the book by Stefan Aust, *Baader-Meinhof — The Inside Story of the R.A.F.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
7. It has recently become known that the policeman who did the shooting was an undercover agent of the Stasi, the secret police in communist East Germany at the time. This makes it probable that East Germany had heated up the student protest in capitalist West Germany so as to embarrass and weaken the West German authorities. See the head article in the leading Germany weekly *Der Spiegel*: Dirk Kurbjuweit et al., “Verrat vor dem Schuss” [Treason before the Shot], *Der Spiegel*, May 25, 2009, 42ff.
8. “Konzept Stadtguerilla” in Martin Hoffmann, ed., *Rote Armee Fraktion. Texte und Materialien zur Geschichte der RAF* (Berlin: ID-Verlag, 1997), 27–48.
9. Rasterfahndung.
10. Isolationsfolter.
11. Der deutsche Herbst.
12. Schleyer’s three bodyguards and his driver were killed during the kidnapping.
13. Their suicide actually constitutes a further stage in the struggle, seeing as their sympathizers immediately began spreading the account according to which Baader, Ensslin, and Raspe had been murdered. The fact not with standing that a number of unresolved questions remain, most researchers of the events (with Stefan Aust foremost among them), support the official version of the story.
14. Thus, for instance, Sartre adopted without any confirmation (other than Baader’s own words) the group’s claim that they were undergoing sophisticated forms of torture in prison. See Sartre’s article: “La Mort Lente d’Andreas Baader,” *Libération*, December 7, 1974, <http://www.liberation.fr/cahier-special/0101521930-1973-1975-sartre-ecrit-dans-libe>.
15. See John Gerassi, *Talking With Sartre: Conversations and Debates* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 205–214. Sartre’s principal criticism of the Baader-Meinhof Group had to do with the fact that their actions did not enjoy sufficiently widespread support among

the West German public. Compare also the interview in *Der Spiegel* 49, December 2, 1974, 166ff. Albeit, Sartre decries the murder of the West German Judge Drenkmann as a crime, he in the same breath also says that, had it been a case involving a judge who was taking part in the terrorists' trial, violent action against him would have been justified. Sartre grounded his basic solidarity with Baader-Meinhof in their belonging to the leftist anti-capitalist wing of the political spectrum, a circumstance which automatically outfitted them with revolutionaries' haloes in his eyes. This approach of Sartre's, who was undoubtedly a complex thinker, is surprising in its simplistic bent. Bernard Henri Levy, the author of an overly sympathetic biography of Sartre, describes Sartre's penchant for leftist terrorism as giving in to the "totalitarian temptation." See Bernard Henri Levy, *Sartre: The Philosopher of the Twentieth Century*, trans. Andrew Brown (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 204. Cf. *ibid.*, 342–345, as well.

16. *Ibid.*, 328–329.

17. *Ibid.*, 331–334.

18. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, trans. Carol Macomber (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 20. What follows is based on this small but influential pamphlet of Sartre's.

19. *Ibid.*, 28–29.

20. *Ibid.*, 30.

21. *Ibid.*, 28–29. It is generally well known that this problem of the origin of the ethical demand with which the human being is faced, is what forced Kant to cast God as a "postulate" (a requirement), since, without Him, morality cannot be obligatory in practice. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis White Beck (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1956), 128ff. The existentialist Sartre obviously cannot accept a solution of this kind.

22. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt a.M.: Akademie Verlag, 1995), 12, 19. Sartre is also aware of this problem; see his *Existentialism is a Humanism* (see note 18 above), 35–37.

23. This finds its expression as early as the writings of Franz Rosenzweig, a thinker who is considered to be a harbinger of existentialism. Rosenzweig abandoned the teachings of Hegel because of their excessive stressing the collective at the expense of the individual; see my article "Ha-Yahadut ke-Tofaah a-Historit be-Tefisato shel Franz Rosenzweig" ["Judaism as an Historical Phenomenon in Franz Rosenzweig's Conception"] in Dov Landau, ed., *Sefer ha-Mikhlatot: Minchah le-Shenat ha-Yovel shel Medinat Yisrael* (Jerusalem: Department of Publications at the Ministry of Education, 2000), 125–126.

24. See Sartre (see note 18 above), 22ff.

25. *Ibid.*

26. Kurt Oesterle, *Stammheim. Die Geschichte des Vollzugsbeamten Horst Bubeck* (Tübingen: Klopfer & Meyer, 2003), 16–17.

27. Preface by Jean-Paul Sartre to Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove /Atlantic Press, 2005).

28. Something that, taken in its own right, is thoroughly rare in an existentialist setting.

29. *Ibid.*, lv.

30. In his introduction to the collection of essays in Albert Camus, *Actuelles III, Chroniques Algériennes 1939–1958* (Paris: Les Éditions Gallimard, 1958), 14–15 (translator's English rendition of the original).

31. Albert Camus, *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt*, trans. Anthony Bower (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), 292.

32. Levy (see note 15 above).

33. *Ibid.*, 347.

34. See *ibid.*, 344–347, where Levy has collected a number of particularly striking instances of the extremism and the verbal violence that Sartre was willing to employ.